DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 453 112 SO 032 752

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TITLE The Building Blocks of Character Education: Respect, Responsibility, Citizenship.
PUB DATE 2001-05-00
NOTE 97p.; Master of Arts Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University and Skylight Professional Development.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses (040) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Action Research; Classroom Environment; Grade 4; Intermediate Grades; *Interpersonal Competence; *Program Implementation; Social Studies; *Student Improvement
IDENTIFIERS *Character Development; *Character Education

ABSTRACT

This action research report describes a program to improve and enhance students' social skills in and out of the classroom. The targeted population consisted of two fourth grade classrooms at two different suburban sites. The need to address this issue seems to have grown due to an increase in school violence and the decline of the traditional family. Analyzing the causes revealed that students are being influenced by a variety of changes: breakdown in the family, an increase of media intake, no social skill implementation in the curriculum, deficiency of communication between students, low self-esteem and achievement, and insufficient support from parents and teachers to teach social skills. Children are not receiving the nurturing that past generations received, and as a result society is seeing an increasing population of children who are unsure about what is right and what is wrong. Review of the literature suggests poor classroom climate, inadequate character education programs, and lack of student acceptance of responsibility as additional causes. A review of solution strategies led to the selection of these intervention techniques: creating a social skills program, raising parent and teacher awareness of the importance of social skills, and helping children learn how to communicate effectively. The interventions used had a positive influence on the behaviors of the targeted students. The numbers of occurrences of inappropriate behavior were reduced. The degree of success with a character education program depends upon the frequency of classroom instruction and the commitment of the teacher to the program. (Contains 7 figures, 5 tables, and 40 references. Attached are 12 appendixes of surveys and questionnaires.) (Author/BT)

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THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF CHARACTER EDUCATION: RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, CITIZENSHIP

SO 032 752

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partical Fulfullment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

St. Xavier University & IRI/Skylight

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

May, 2001

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ABSTRACT

This action research describes a program to improve and enhance students' social skills in and out of the classroom. The targeted population consists of two fourth grade classrooms at two different suburban sites. The need to address this issue seems to have grown due to an increase in school violence and the decline of the traditional family.

Analyzing the causes revealed that students are being influenced by a variety of changes: breakdown in the family, an increase of media intake, no social skill implementation in the curriculum, deficiency of communication between students, low self-esteem and achievement, and insufficient support from parents and teachers to teach social skills. Children are not receiving the nurturing that past generations received, and as a result, society is seeing an increasing population of children who are unsure about what is right and what is wrong. Review of literature suggests poor classroom climate, inadequate character education programs, and lack of student acceptance of responsibility as additional causes.

A review of solution strategies suggested by the literature led to the selection of these intervention techniques: creating a social skills program, raising parent and teacher awareness of the importance of social skills, and helping children learn how to communicate effectively. Throughout the country, schools are working hand in hand with communities to cultivate character development through school curricula and after-school activities.

The interventions used had a positive influence on the behaviors of the targeted students. The numbers of occurrences of inappropriate behavior were reduced. The degree of success with a character education program depends upon the frequency of classroom instruction and the commitment of the teacher to the program. The consistency of the program can effect to what degree the program is successful.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted fourth grade classes, display inappropriate social behaviors such as lack of responsibility, lack of respect and lack of citizenship that interferes with their learning environment. Evidence for the existence of these problems include student to student confrontations, lack of responsibility in academic areas, and poor attitude toward peers.

Immediate Problem Context

This action research was conducted at two separate elementary school districts in different suburban communities. Each setting will be described separately as Site A and Site B.

Site A

The targeted elementary school consisted of grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, and was located in the southwestern suburbs. The all brick school was a one level building in the shape of rectangle with an open courtyard in the middle. It was originally built in 1964 with 15 classrooms for first through fifth grade. From 1970 to 1972, two separate additions were built that turned the building into kindergarten through fifth grade, with rooms available for special education inclusion classes. The school was in

fair condition and all of the classrooms were presently being utilized with music/art, a computer lab, and a library. This was a community-based school with the majority of the 530 students walking to and from school. There were a total of 160 students who ride the bus back and forth to school.

The faculty consisted of 6 special education teachers, 16 full-time elementary teachers, 2 physical education teachers, 2 librarians, 1 speech teacher, 2 part-time occupational therapists, 1 art and 1 music teacher who were split between other schools in the district and a part-time English as a second language teacher. Other staff members include an assistant principal, two part-time health clerks, two full-time secretaries, and two full-time custodians. The staff was 100% Caucasian and 90% female with only two male teachers. The majority of teachers had 16.1% years of teaching experience, and ranged from 2 years to 30 years. Forty percent of the teachers had a master's degree or above. The pupil to teacher ratio in the elementary building was 18.7 to one (State School Report Card, 1999).

The student population at Site A was 499 students. The major ethnic/racial composition was 94.8% Caucasian, 2.6% Hispanic, 1.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.8% Native American, and 0.4% African American. The elementary site had a 5.2% low income students and a mobility rate of 8.8%. The attendance rate was 95.4% and the truancy rate was 0.0% at Site A. English as a second language students were 1.6% (State School Report Card, 1999).

The average class size for Site A was 26 pupils. According to State Achievement Test scores for 4th grade, 47% met the standards and 31% exceeded the standards (State School Report Card, 1999). The school consisted of 15 self-contained classrooms with

the exception of three special education classrooms. There was also one severe physically handicapped classroom, two early childhood classrooms, along with one pre-kindergarten room for at-risk 4 year olds. Each grade level consisted of a team of three regular education teachers. All students in the school shared the physical education teacher, and the music/art teacher. The school day started at 9:00 a.m. every morning, with two lunch periods at 11:40 a.m. and 12:20 p.m. and ended at 3:07 p.m.

The district wide population for Site A was about 1,766 students. The major racial/ethnic composition was 93.1% Caucasian, 4.0% Hispanic, 1.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.0% African American and 0.3% Native American. According to the 1999 School Report Card, approximately 7.2 % of the students came from families with low income and 1.6% of the students had limited English proficiency (State School Report Card, 1999).

The total number of teachers in the district was presently at 110 of which 11.8% are male and 88.2% are female. The racial/ethnic background of these teachers were 99.1% White, and .9% Hispanic. The average teaching experience in the district was 16.1 years, with 59.9% having a bachelor's degree and 40.1% earning a master's degree or above. The pupil-teacher ratio was 18.7:1 at the elementary level in the district. The average teacher salary for the district was $37,311 and the average administrative salary was $69,869. The district's instructional expenditure per pupil is $2,973, but the operating expenditure for each pupil is $5,092.

Site A did not presently have a character education program implemented in the school curriculum. However, in the past it had tried several different character education programs.

Site B

Site B housed kindergarten through eighth grade. It was a split building for elementary and middle school students. The all brick building that was originally built in 1963 was a melting pot of several building additions that have been established between the years of 1989 and 1997. All 27 classrooms were occupied throughout the building. This was a community-based school and all students walk or get a ride to school, Site B did not offer bus service to the community.

The staff at Site B consisted of 31 full time elementary teachers, 2 librarians, 6 special educations teachers, and 7 teacher assistants. A principal and two full time secretaries made up the administrative staff at Site B. The staff's ethnic background at Site B consisted of 100% of the staff being Caucasian. The faculty had an 83% female and 17% male gender make-up. The teachers at Site B had 14.7 years teaching experience with 71.4% of the teachers having a master's degree or above. The pupil to teacher ratio in Site B was 16.9: 1 (School Report Card, 1999).

The student population at Site B was 554 students. The major ethnic/racial composition was 96.2% Caucasian, 2.5% Hispanic, 0.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.5% African American and 0.0% Native American. The elementary site had a 0.0% low-income students and a mobility rate of 3.1%. The attendance rate was 97.1% and the truancy rate was 0.0% at Site A. English as a second language students were 0.0% (State School Report Card, 1999).

The average class size for Site B was 24 students per classroom. The State Achievement Test showed that 50% of the students met the standards and 39% exceeded the standards (State School Report Card, 1999). Students at Site B went to science,

computers, art, music, and gym with other teachers. There were also programs for gifted and slow learners. The school had a pull out special education program and also had a classroom for children with multi-physical needs. Each grade level consisted of a team of four elementary teachers. The school day started at 8:30 a.m. and ended at 3:10 p.m. The children had a choice to either go home or stay for lunch at school.

Site B had a total student population of 867 students in the district. The majority of the students were 97.2% Caucasian. The district had a 0.2% African-American population, 1.0% Hispanic population, and 1.2% Asian population. The families of this community were considered middle to upper-middle socio-economic status. There was no low-income population in Site B. Site B had a 96.8% attendance rate, and 5.1% mobility rate. The pupil-teacher ratio was 17.6:1 at the elementary level in the district. The average teacher salary was $43,472 and the average administrative salary was $98,742. The district's instructional expenditure per pupil was $4,284, the operating expenditure for each pupil in the district is $6,857 (State School Report Card, 1999).

Site B did not have a character education program implemented into their curriculum.

The Surrounding Community

Site A

The community surrounding Site A was located halfway between two large cities. Since 1985, this community had added about 150 new homes each year. Most homes surrounding the school were brick and aluminum sided, three to four bedroom split-level and raised ranches. The majority of homes were built between 1960 and 1975. The residences typically sold for around 150,000 to 200,000. Site A also had a few

condominiums and apartment complexes that housed the more mobile families of the district. The current population of this community now exceeded 28,000 people.

The median income for the community in 1999, was $73,094. Nearly 17% of the adults in the community had a median age range of 30 to 39, and 16.5% in the age range of 40 to 49. The largest minority groups were 95.2% Caucasian, 2.7% Hispanic, 1.7% other ethnic groups and 0.4% are African American. The people living around Site A had mostly managerial and professional jobs, along with administrative positions (Local Newspaper, 1990).

The parent involvement at school functions was very high, with the majority of parents attending open houses and other school functions. The educational levels of the members of the community were 39.3% of the adults holding a high school diploma, with both parents of most families working out of the home (Local Newspaper, 1990).

Site B

The community surrounding Site B was located between two large cities. The housing developers had constructed single family dwellings, condominiums, and multifamily units. Houses had a median home value starting at $238,000.

The current population was $14,862. The median income for community B in 1999 was about $96,917. Approximately, 18% of the population had a median age range of 30-39. The largest minority groups were 90.0% Caucasian, 19.0% European, 6.4% African American, and 0.7% other ethnic groups. The citizens of Site B were mostly white-collar workers with emphasis on managerial, professional occupations. (Local Newspaper, 1990)

Site B had strong parental support. The school had large numbers of parents who

attend for parent conferences and various school functions. The community's educational attainment had members with a bachelor's degree 28.3% and 18.6% with a graduate degree. The majority of students came from a dual income family (Local Newspaper, 1990).

National Context of the Problem

Schools are faced with the growing concern that today's youth do not have the universal values and morals of yesterday's youth, as evidence by a lack of respect, bullying others, and giving into violent outbursts. These are signs indicating that our society has changed. Schools are now assuming the responsibility for developing character or social skills among their students. Many school districts have instituted programs that do two things: provide students with grounding in such values as courage and caring and teach them how to solve disputes peacefully (Lunstrum, 1999).

Character education has landed the support from state and federal legislatures. Many states mandate character education programs. In July of 1999, new character education law took effect in Florida and Mississippi (Jacobson, 1999) New Haven, Connecticut has two middle schools that have started social development programs in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade to teach problem-solving skills, how to negotiate peer relationships, and instill basic social values (Harrington-Lueker, 1997). The federal government has seen the need to experiment and research different character education programs for schools to implement. For the past 4 years, the federal government has been supporting the development of pilot character education programs for schools to put into practice into their curriculum (Jacobson, 1999).

Some teachers and administrators feel that the school should not be responsible for teaching morals and values to students. Research has seen that teachers with the most experience

view character education as a burden (Jacobson, 1999). Other teachers view the development of social skills as not within their understanding nor believe they have the time and expertise to infuse social skills training into their classroom routines (Kerr & Zigmond, 1986).

On the other hand, the majority of teachers support the idea of implementing a character education program into the curriculum. Teachers in favor of starting a character education program, believe that teaching children lessons about such virtues as citizenship, patriotism, and tolerance is the role that schools and teachers have always played (Jacobson, 1999). Educators who opt to develop students' emotional intelligence skills must also be prepared to defend this choice because people, both inside and outside of school, will complain that the programs take valuable time away from core academic subjects (Harrington-Lueker, 1997).

Society has seen the decline in a child's social development. This has been evident in the media from Columbine, Colorado to Decatur, Illinois According to Lundstrom (1999), Schools have also had to take action to stop bullying in their schools. Many teachers are faced with the problems of students confronting other students, student put-downs, and a lack of responsibility when it comes to homework or their own actions. A silent cry for something to be done to improve children's morals and ethical backbone is evident in today's society. There is evidence that the need for teaching social skills in the classroom is necessary and that it can be done through special programs incorporated into the curriculum. Character education is not going to make the evil go away, but it is a step that can help (Jacobson, 1999).

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

The problem was identified as students exhibiting inappropriate social skills such as: lack of respect and responsibility and poor citizenship skills in the targeted fourth grade classes at Site A and Site B. The tools that were created to assess this problem include a teacher survey (See Appendix B) and a student survey (See Appendix C). Both student and teacher surveys were developed and used at Site A and Site B. The researchers first sent home a parent permission letter (See Appendix A) to launch their action research project.

The results of the student survey are presented in Figure 1. The student surveys were distributed during the first week of school, September 2000, to 28 students.

The student survey was completed by 28 students in the targeted fourth grade class. Figure 1 indicates that the percentage of responses of behaviors observed by these students was: using a disrespectful tone (93%), saying shut-up to fellow students (89%), calling each other inappropriate names (89%). The top four observed behaviors all involve not being respectful to fellow students. This seems to indicate that most students are aware of disrespectful behavior and can recognize this inappropriate behavior in others. But when the behavior in question is done by the student, only 36% felt that they were being disrespectful to a teacher or student and 39% admitted to saying shut-up to

others. The percentages were also small with 46% of the students revealing that they called others inappropriate names.

The student survey at Site B was given the first week of school in September 2000. The 18 students at Site B who took the survey indicated that the most frequently observed behaviors were: saying shut-up (100%) and talking back to teachers or students (100%). The students also indicated (94%) that calling names was very inappropriate. The most reoccurring behaviors seen at Site B were showing disrespect and lack of citizenship by students.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 both reflect what behaviors were observed most and are seen as being disrespectful and not showing responsibility. The tables indicate that the students are quick to see misbehaviors of others more readily than in themselves. It seems that students can easily recognize when other students lie, talk back, or are disrespectful, as shown in the high percentages in Figure 1. But they are more forgiving of their own transgressions and do not want to admit it when they are lying, talking back or being disrespectful, as seen by the lower percentages indicated in Figure B.

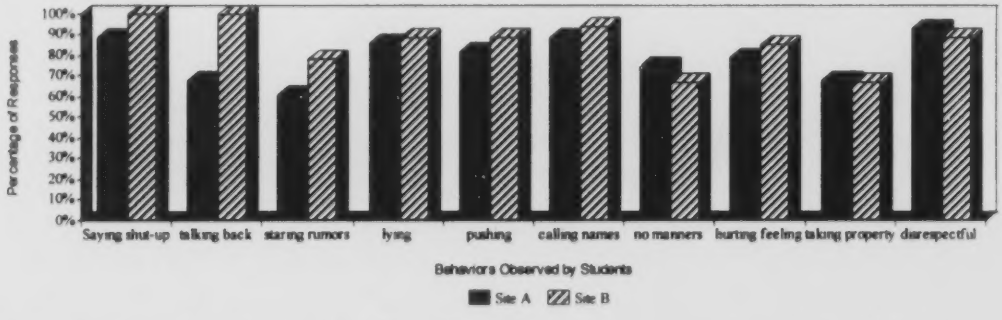

Figure 1. Categories of student observed behaviors and a comparison of site A & B.

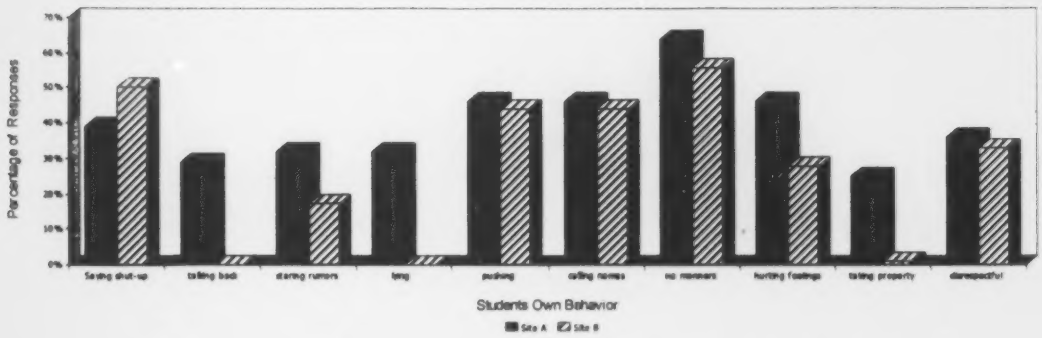

Figure 2. Categories of student's personal behavior in comparison with Site A and Site B

The final response on the survey involved asking the students to state how they thought they should get along with one another. Students at both sites indicated that "being nice to one another" and "being respectful" are the essential skills to learn. Using appropriate manners meant saying please and thank you and not getting into verbal confrontations with one another. Students felt that being nice and polite included caring about one another, giving each other compliments, and being considerate of each other. Overall, the students felt that being respectful to each other and each other's property was very important to display. A few students felt that sharing was an important skill to have in the classroom.

Figure 3 & Figure 4 show a comparison of student suggestions at Site A & Site B.

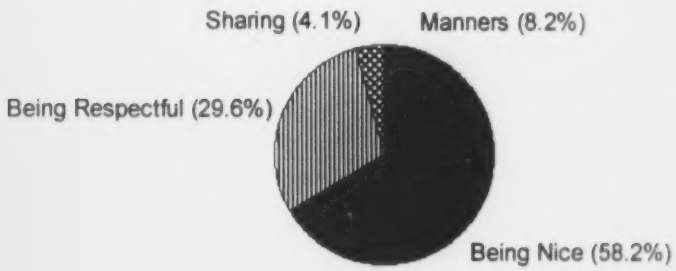

Figure 3. Site A student suggestions for how to get along with one another.

Out of a total of 28 responses to the survey, more than one half targeted "being nice" and almost one third targeted "being respectful", followed by "good manners" and "sharing" as being the best way students should get along with one another.

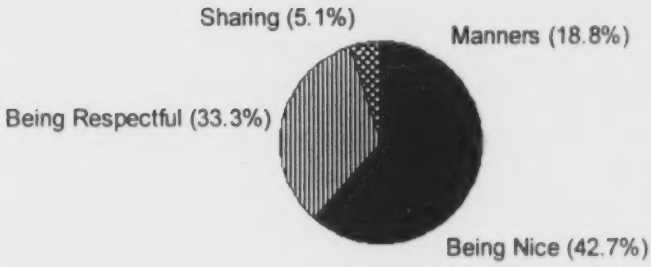

Figure 4. Site B student suggestions for how to get along with one another.

Among the total 18 responses from the survey, students at Site B also put the greatest emphasis on "being nice" and "being respectful", followed by "good manners" and "sharing".

Students at both sites indicated that being "nice and polite" are very important skills to learn in order to get along with one another. " Respecting teacher's and each other's property," are the next most essential skill students deemed important. It would seem, according to the results of the data, that students in the 4th grade have a good knowledge of what social skills are valuable to learn. "Having good manners" and "sharing" would seem to be not as important to learn as the other skills.

Table 1A

Teacher Survey About Student's Positive Social Skills Displayed at Site A

Question	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
How often do students show respect to teacher and students?	0%	0%	12%	70%	18%
Do students understand others feelings and talk appropriately to one another?	0%	3%	35%	55%	7%
How often do students use "please and thank you"?	0%	6%	53%	41%	0%

N=17

A survey was given to teachers at Site A (See Appendix B), in September, 2000. Seventeen teachers who returned the survey teach physical education, music, art, kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, and fifth grade. The data in Table 1A targeted positive social skills that the teachers observed in their students. The data in Table 1A show that nearly three fourths of the teachers believe students often show respect to teachers and other students. In response to question two "Do students understand each other's feeling and talk appropriately to one another?" teachers indicated that slightly over one half of the students behave this way. A little over one third of the teachers responded with sometimes, with the remaining believing students always act appropriately. The data reflect that slightly over one half of the teachers feel students are sometimes "polite and say please thank you."

Table 1B

Teacher Survey About Student's Negative Social Skills Displayed at Site A

Question	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
Are students dishonest to teacher and/or students?	0%	59%	35%	6%	0%
Do students take or touch property of others?	0%	30%	40%	30%	0%
How often do students argue or talk back?	6%	70%	18%	6%	0%

N=17

Table 1B (See Appendix B), questions were about negative social skills that the students exhibit at Site A. Close to two thirds of the teachers think students are seldom dishonest to teachers or students, and about one-third responded with sometimes. Only 6% of the teachers felt students are often dishonest. Question two, which includes students being respectful of each other's property, has an even range of responses. The responses for question three, which involve students arguing or talking back, encompass a wide range of answers. About three fourths of the teachers felt that students seldom do these behaviors.

Table 2A

Teacher Survey About Student's Positive Social Skills Displayed at Site B

Question	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
How often do students show respect to teacher and students?	0%	0%	11%	78%	11%
Do students understand others feelings and talk appropriately to one another?	0%	1%	25%	74%	0%
How often do students use "please and thank you"?	0%	1%	45%	54%	0%

N=27

The teacher survey was submitted to 27 teachers who all responded in September, 2000 at Site B. The data at Site B was also split into positive and negative behavior questions as well. Table 2A data indicates that a little over three fourths of the teachers responded that students often show respect to their teachers and other students. Nearly three fourths of the teachers responded that students often understand other's feelings and talk appropriately to one another. The data shows that about half of the teachers feel that their students sometimes and often use appropriate manners by "saying please and thank you."

Table 2B

Teacher Survey About Student's Negative Social Skills Displayed at Site B

Question	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
Are students dishonest to teacher and/or students?	1%	61%	38%	0%	0%
Do students take or touch property of others?	1%	34%	50%	15%	0%
How often do students argue or talk back?	20%	79%	0%	1%	0%

N=27

Table 2B (See Appendix B) indicates data of the negative behaviors that were seen by teachers at Site B. For question one, three fifths of the teachers felt that students are seldom dishonest to their teachers and classmates. Half of the twenty-seven teachers surveyed felt that students sometimes take or touch others property along with virtually two fifths seldom feel that their students take or touch what does not belong to them. Four fifths of the teachers at Site B felt that the students seldom argue or talk back and one fifth felt that students never were disrespectful to teachers.

Table 3

Teacher's Response to Losing Instructional Time Due to Lack of Social Skills

Site	Yes Response	No Response
Site A	65%	35%
Site B	59%	41%

Site A, N=17 Site B, N=27

The responses from a question on the teacher's survey as to whether teachers are losing instructional time because of a lack of social skills among students, were very similar at both sites. Slightly more than three fifths of the teachers at Site A felt they were losing instructional time in the classroom, due to a lack of poor social skills. Over one half of the teachers at Site B felt they were losing instructional time, due to a lack of social skills displayed in their classes . Yet at the same time, and in the same survey, the teachers at both Site A and Site B responded that their students did demonstrate appropriate social skills, most of the time. Three fourths of teachers at Site A and four fifths of the teachers at Site B indicated that the students do not display observable negative behavior of being dishonest, or arguing and talking back. One might surmise that the teachers are teaching social skills in their classrooms, whether it is part of the curriculum or not. Teachers naturally correct disrespectful behavior, and in the last few years it would seem that students' behaviors' are increasing in intensity. Possibly some teachers have to correct or address students' inappropriate behaviors more often, so naturally the teachers think they are losing instructional time to accomplish this.

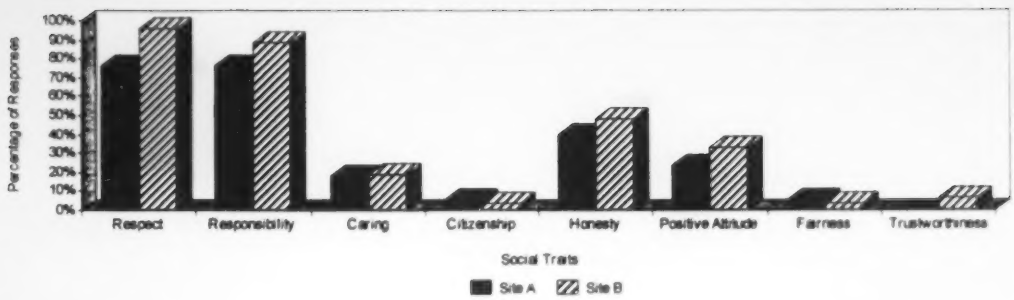

Figure 5. Comparison of teacher responses to the most important social traits at Site A and Site B.

At the end of the survey, teachers had to choose three character traits that they felt are important out of eight choices. The eight choices were respect, responsibility, caring, citizenship, honesty, positive attitude, fairness, and trustworthiness. The data illustrated in Figure 5 that the majority of teachers at Site A and Site B felt that respect, responsibility, and honesty were the most important social traits for a student to master. If teachers had to teach social skills in the classroom, respect, responsibility, and honesty would be the traits to focus on. Trustworthiness, fairness, and citizenship were not seen as essential social traits that teachers need to concentrate on teaching at both Site A & B.

Probable Causes

Should our schools teach social skills? Character education is not a new idea; in fact it has been developed in many countries all over the world to help young children become successful adults.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle defines good character as the life of right conduct to other persons and to oneself (Lickona, 1992). Whether we like it or not, values are learned through observation, and, Aristotle noted, through practice. Social skills are also complex. They involve overt, observable behaviors, as well as covert

problem-solving skills. Character education is a way to help children develop all the skills they will need to become successful adults. Children of today need to learn more than just reading, writing, and arithmetic in schools. They need to develop a set of core values that they can build on and guide their behavior and attitudes. Good character does not develop spontaneously. Knoblock (1997) states that there are six building blocks of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. These values form the foundation of character education.

In today's society, our young people have many admirable qualities, but there is increasing evidence that we also see some qualities like selfishness, frustration, self-doubt, and rejection of authority figures. Most of today's youth want to live good lives, but given the pressures, confusions and realities of today, do not know how to go about it. When schools take the time to show them how to use appropriate respectful methods to do so, the innate goodness of young people seems to burst forth and shine brilliantly (Harmin, 1998).

There are many factors that contribute to the decline of social skills in today's children. The varieties of factors are: the breakdown in the family, an increase of media intake, no social skill implementation in the curriculum, and insufficient support from parents and teachers to teach social skills in the classroom (Fagan, 1995). The literature tells us that some possible solutions are creating a social skills program, raising parent and community awareness of the importance of social skills, and helping children learn how to communicate effectively (Lickona, 1993).

Changes in the family have contributed to the need to teach social skills in the classroom. Parents were their children's first moral teachers (Lickona, 1993), but an

increase in parents working outside the home is one of the factors that have affected a child's moral development. If families cannot meet the basic physical and emotional needs of children, how can they prepare themselves to function in school mentally and morally? Most families today have been touched by the influx of divorce. One of two United States marriages ends in divorce (Lickona, 1993). Almost one third of our children live in a one-parent family, an increase from 11% in 1970 (America's Children, 2000). Children raised by a single parent have less financial and educational advantages than those with two parents (America's Children, 2000). If current trends continue, less than half of the children born today will live continuously with their own mother and father throughout childhood. An increasing number of children will experience family break-up two or even three times during their childhood (Lickona, 1993). Now more than ever, children are living in a single parent household with a working parent who has to work out of economic necessity.

The relationship between the parents and the child has played a role in the development of a child. Fagan (1995) stated that the relationship between parents, not just the relationship between mother and child, has a powerful effect on very young children as well. The parent-child relationship has a special significance if children feel unloved and unimportant in the home. According to Dobert and Winkler (1985) adolescents who follow their consciences when faced with a moral dilemma had parents who took their children's moral transgressions seriously. In contrast, permissive parents and authoritarian parents were less successful in raising self-controlled socially responsible children (Baumrind, 1975). Fagan (1995) reports that parent skills in solving family problems correlate significantly with measures of academic skills and peer

relations. Children who fail to acquire appropriate social skills have a lower probability of completing school, becoming employed, and becoming well-adjusted adults (Elksnin, 1998)

In today's society, families are more mobile than ever before. Every year 1 in 5 families moves away from the people who give parents a support network and children a sense of who they are (Lickona, 1992). In the United States there are more than 8 million latchkey children. Since the beginning of time, wisdom has been passed down from elders to the young trough stories. So much of our understanding of character comes from stories like these. Lickona (1993) states that according to a fourth grade teacher in Central New York:

> The changes we're seeing in kids, such as the increase in meanness, reflect changes in families. A lot of these kids are coming home to empty houses. They open the door, open a can of Spaghetti-O's, do their own laundry, take the same clothes, and put them back on. These kids have a lot of responsibility, but only for themselves. They develop a hard shell. That's why so many of them are coming up cruel. (p. 33)

The changes in the family have made the school's job as moral educators much more difficult.

Another factor that leads to a decline in social values is the increase of media intake in our young children. According to Logan (1999) children have been exposed to violent images without the guidance and nurturing needed to help them make hard decisions and choices. This past century has seen a dramatic rise of the mass media as values shapers. In an average American family, the television set is on 7 hours and 5

minutes a day; the typical elementary school child watches 32 hours a week (Lickona, 1993). Television is now taking the place of social interaction between the family members. Children learn their moral values through human contact, which means face-to-face communication with important adults. Today's youth witness violence on television, movies, and video games. According to Lickona (1992) the effect is either to increase children's own violent tendencies or to desensitize them to the violent acts of others. Condry , a professor of human development and family studies at Cornell University, states there are innumerable rebel messages that include an average of 25 acts of violence every hour (as cited in Lasley, 1997).

Commercials on programs designed for children rarely stressed being helpful or obedient. The values seen are: selfishness and self-serving over altruistic values (Lasley, 1997). John Condry stated that there are six pro-drug advertisements for every anti-drug message (as cited in Lasley, 1997). Children need to learn how not to be manipulated by commercials and be able to make moral judgments about the choices they are confronted with on television. In our country television networks are not accountable to anyone but its sponsors and cable television is not responsible to anyone but its paying customers. There has also been a lack of proper role models in the media today from disc jockeys to athletes.

The third factor that influences the breakdown of character in children is not having a social skills program as part of the curriculum. Character education is an integral part of the curriculum not an addition to it. There are many schools that do not have a character education program and others that are just now seeing the importance of implementing one into their curriculum. Teaching social skills cannot be accomplished

through the efforts of anyone teacher, parent, or institution. The responsibility for developing a nation of morally conscience students must be shared by all people and organizations-schools, families, churches, communities, and government (Knoblock, 1997).

Educators are confused because of the inconsistent trend of teaching "values." In the 1950s teachers were instructed to no longer teach responsibility, respect, and good citizenship. Then in the 1960s and into the 1970s teaching emphasized more freedom and less responsibility toward the family, church, and community. In the mid 1980s with crime increasing in schools and schools receiving failing grades in academic achievement, a renewed effort to spotlight values at schools began to grow again. The pendulum of values swung back to the right emphasizing back to the basics in the classroom (Kirschenbaum, 1992). Core ethical values such as respect, responsibility and honesty need to be taught and modeled. Since 1994, at least 14 states have developed programs on character education according to the Education Commission of the States, and in Alabama, there is a mandated 10 minutes of character education in each school at all grade levels (Reies, 1999). In the new 21st Century, schools have recognized that there is an immediate need to teach social skills within the classroom. Across the country some form of character education is being taught in all 50 states, according to Ester Schaeffer of the Character Education Partnership, an advocacy group in Washington.

The final factor is the insufficient support from teachers and parents to start a character education program in the schools. Teachers complain about teaching social skills for variety of reasons. One being, that they are unsure of how to implement a character education program into the curriculum. With a lack of time needed to teach

most subjects and to meet the standards set by the state, most educators regarded basic academic skills instruction as their only responsibility. According to Elksnin, (1998) social skills instruction was considered the responsibility of parents; children were expected to arrive at school socially skilled. Therefore, some teachers do not feel that it is their right or duty to teach common values that should be taught at home. Some teachers do not have proper training to teach a character education program. If we expect teachers to provide character education to children, we should provide them with a background that includes an understanding of moral principals and experiences in ethical reasoning. An effective teacher education program must begin with the personal ethical/moral development of the prospective teacher (Weber, 1999).

Some educators say that by promoting the adoption of certain values is a form of indoctrination and that schools should restrict themselves to encouraging critical thinking about values. Schools who wish to teach value education needs to not only expose students to these values but also help them to understand, internalize, and act upon these values (Lickona, 1992). There is a lack of parental support in some cases to not have a character education program in their school district. Some parents feel that the schools do not have the right to teach their child values or morals because they do that in the home, church, or community.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

The Literature indicates that there are many different and exciting solutions for the problem of inappropriate social skills being displayed in our schools today. Some of these possible solutions are: (a) implementing character education programs in schools, (b) helping families teach values, (c) building community character education programs, and (d) teaching children how to communicate effectively.

Last year the federal department of education gave $5.2 million out to schools for character education; the figure is expected to double next year (Ferguson, 1999). Most school districts are trying to make a commitment to teach a character education program for a three to five year period. Most of the programs found in the literature research are based on six core values: respect, responsibility, citizenship, trustworthiness, honesty, and caring.

Implementing Character Education Programs

There is a diversity of different social skills programs currently being used in as many school districts across the nation. At East Hills International Studies Academy, a public magnet school in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the Heartwood Program is taught. This program uses trade book based curriculum designed around seven universal values:

courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty and love. Students can discuss the problems and choices faced by a book's character without infringing on anyone's beliefs or background. This helps children identify behaviors in characters and in life – that express these traits. Careful thought has to go into choosing books that will inspire students to consider and reveal their different perspectives (Logan, 1996).

The Second Step Youth Violence Prevention Program is another character education program developed by the Committee for Children, in Seattle, Washington. This program teaches empathy and problem solving through the use of picture cards, puppets, and books. The Kovalik Lifeskills program, conceived by educational consultant Susan Kovalik, of Kent, Washington, stresses 17 skills, among them organization, effort, common sense, curiosity, and flexibility (Lundstrom, 1995).

A coalition of hundreds of leading educational, youth serving, and community organizations dedicated to strengthening the character of youth, is widely known as the Character Counts Program. The Character Counts focuses around the six pillars of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Their purpose is to provide opportunities in the classroom that teach and reinforce the core ethical values that comprise good character (Steele, 1999). " No separate classes in character are taught, but teachers say it is integrated into the curriculum; thus a lesson about Helen Keller becomes a case study in courage and persistence" (Ferguson, 1999 p. 3).

Some schools also adopted the Effective Behavior Support System. This system focuses on training students in social skills, restructuring their academics, teaching behavioral interventions and flexibility. This program is initiated with resources, such as

reallocating funds, redefining teachers' roles, and implementing school-wide goals. Researchers learned that school officials not only saw discipline problems decline, but also prevented many at-risk students from misbehaving. Educators say that the system is working and the school is a much calmer place (Sack, 1999).

Cleveland has adopted the Winning Against Violent Environment (WAVE), program in 118 of their schools. Teachers select two students, starting in third grade, for mediation training: one a "positive" leader with good grades and attendance, one a "negative" leader of a disruptive group. From third grade up, these students are trained in groups of 25 to 30 using such hands-on activities as drawing and role-play. Then these trained students work as conflict managers, acting informally to settle disputes on the playgrounds, in cafeterias and classrooms (Lundstrom, 1999).

Around the country schools are promoting a number of different programs to develop good character. In Chicago, an organization called "For Character" has sponsored an awards program to recognize area elementary and secondary schools that excel in fostering both student character and academic excellence. The Birch Meadow Elementary School in Reading, Massachusetts, believes that schools should be integrated with a healthy dose of democracy, to teach students the skills and values of democratic citizenship.

A popular Canadian curriculum based citizenship program for Grades 4 through 6 is called PREPARE. This program consists of seven curriculum units designed to strengthen self-esteem in the face of peer pressure, deal with conflict in a positive, non-violent way, take responsibility for one's own decisions, and develop an understanding of prejudice. Each of the seven curriculum units includes a student activity book and a

teacher's guide. These units were developed employing a curriculum-designed strategy: taking a broad concept and breaking it down into six or eight "key ideas" Classroom activities are then developed to help students grasp and apply each of the key ideas (Lickona, 1999). A character education program in schools today has to be both flexible and divergent, because schools are dealing with so many difficult family situations, and diverse cultures than ever before.

Schools have to make their own decision to implement a program that their teachers, administration, and parents feel comfortable teaching. As Goleman's emotional intelligence theory (1995) indicates, students who master social skills and gain acceptance by their peers are better able to achieve personal, social, and academic success for themselves.

Essential elements are needed when developing a character education program for a school or district. Lickona (1991) states that schools wishing to conduct a values education program need to be confident that there are objectively worthwhile, universally agreed-upon values that schools can and should teach in a pluralistic society and schools should not only expose students to these values but also help them understand, internalize, and act upon such values. Moral values can be further broken down into two categories: universal and non-universal. Universal morals are things such as treating people fairly and respecting their lives and property. Non-universal morals are such values that relate to one's religion or personal obligation.

Character education should not be an add-on curriculum. According to the Character Counts Coalition 1998, a project of the Josephson Institute, a program is successful if it includes teaching, enforcing, advocating, and modeling. Teaching means

defining, explaining, and illustrating the values of the program. Enforcing means stressing the values through praise and approval as well as through imposing consequences for unacceptable behavior. Advocating refers to using positive encouragement towards students so that they can appreciate the importance of each character trait. Modeling involves the demonstration of the values taught through words and actions. Students learn from what they can observe and experience. Character education is necessary to help students develop the tools and strategies to make choices they can be proud of.

Helping Families Teach Values

"Values are caught, not taught and once caught they must be practiced" (Lasley, 1997, p 40). The family lays the foundation, which gets built upon by the home, religion, and school. The family and community are the second solution to the development of good character in children. Parents and teachers thought that if they refrained from teaching values youngsters would be free to think for themselves. Instead, children were left to the mercy of their peer groups and the media. Of course, the media had no qualms about imposing their own values on children. The American culture, presented by the media, tends to emphasize the worst, not the best in human beings (Lasley, 1997).

There is an amendment in Congress stating, that parents are the primary and most important moral educators of their children. Representative Thomas Plant states, that it is the teacher's responsibility to uphold the morals of the parents of all children in their classroom (Bartels, 2001). Although the question about whose values will be taught was once regarded as a perplexing one, now the polls tell us that more than 90 percent support stressing honesty, moral courage, caring for friends and family and acceptance of all

people (Leo, 1999).

Most people seem to think that whatever the role of parents or popular society did to play a role in the Columbine shootings, the culture of the school was surely part of the problem. Schools should respond to any crisis by stressing a sense of community and intolerance for bullying, aggression, and cruelty by cliques (Leo, 1999).

When beginning a character education program, Lickona (1996) tells us a leadership committee should be formed consisting of an administrative leader, several key faculty, support staff such as counselors and custodians, and parents. The mission of the parents is to solicit input from other parents, inform parents about the goals of the character-education program, and send materials home that enable parents to reinforce the values being taught at school. The parents group form a committee and take responsibility for keeping all parents informed about the school's values program through newsletters, organizing parent participation programs, and encouraging parents to foster at home the values the school is trying to teach. Schools should be communicating to families that the family is the primary character educator of the child, helping parents to know how powerful they are, and sharing some of the basic research that shows the difference parents can make by spending time with children (Lickona, 1991).

Schools can't teach kindness and other core values without the help of parents. The most effective way to instill virtues in children is by example (Laurie, 1996).

Building Community Character Education Programs

Character education is part of a community effort, not just an undertaking for the parents and schools. Communities should provide their children with many programs that convey positive values and morals. Developing service programs, internships in the

community, advisory and mentoring programs, and extracurricular activities help to bring adults and young people together in ways that encourage students to grow socially and morally (Wagner, 1996).

Since the whole community has a responsibility in the character development of the young, it's important for a school to involve more than just students and parents. Lickona (1991) explains that broad community involvement is helpful in many ways. Communities help identify and gain support for the values that should be taught, it taps valuable ethical expertise in the community, and it generates positive publicity for the school's effort toward character education. School systems that have tried to put into place a values program without informing and involving the community have often faced a backlash of misunderstandings and mistrust (Lickona, 1991).

Many park districts hold a variety of social programs, which will allow students to interact with each other. A community can hold "town meetings" to focus on promoting good citizenship rather than value education in schools. People promoting appropriate citizenship, need to be recognized and applauded as positive role models for the children to have in their community.

According to the Character Counts Coalition of 1998, building character is most effective when you regularly see and seize opportunities to: (a) strengthen awareness of moral obligations and the moral significance of choices (ethical consciousness), (b) enhance the desire to do the right thing (ethical commitment), and (c) improve the ability to foresee potential consequences, devise option, implement principled choices (ethical competency).

At North Clackamas School District in Mlwaukie, Oregon students are asked to write essays or poems about a time they showed compassion for another person. This district has also held assemblies to present awards to students who displayed compassion toward others and who volunteer at a local senior center. Through their community service, students have an opportunity to experience how good it feels to help others (Tarakan, 1996).

Even President George Bush has an interest in strengthening the focus of families, neighborhoods, civic groups, and volunteer organizations. More evidence of the president's interest in community is found in his support for AmeriCorp, which enlists volunteers to help communities with programs for young people and the elderly. The president's proposal for improving schools gives neighborhoods more community control over how schools are run (Williams, 2001).

The messages that are sent to children must be clear, consistent, and repetitive. Children will judge values not by what they hear or see or are permitted to do. They will judge by observing people's actions. Messages about developing mature attitudes, building good character traits, and displaying excellent conduct should be explicit, direct, and specific. Effective character development should be creative and involve real decision making situations that have real consequences. Teaching good character also has to be relevant to the lives and experiences of the student (Lickona, 1991). Educators across the country are trying to instill in children traits like compassion, respect, honesty and responsibility for oneself and others. Many high schools have made participation in some kind of a community service a requirement for graduation (Tarakan, 1996).

Schools and communities need to count on one another and support each other. The long-term success of a values education program depends on forces outside the school. The extent to which families and community join schools in a common effort to meet the needs of our children, will determine the overall success of any character education program (Lickona, 1991).

Teaching Children How to Communicate

The third solution when developing good character in children is teaching children to communicate effectively. The teachers and parents can undertake this role. Teachers can improve children's communication skills through a variety of methods. One way is to hold a class meeting, which emphasizes interactive discussion among class members. Lickona (1991) states that a "class meeting' is a practical tool for setting up rules and maintaining good discipline, makes the classroom a more interesting and enjoyable place, and helps the teacher get to know each student and students to know each other.

Skillful communication can be accomplished by promoting school-wide activities that encourage healthy interactions between students. Schools use pride campaigns, quotations of the week, models/slogans, theme assemblies, hallway displays, social skill pledges, morning announcements, and character traits of the month to accomplish this task. Teachers can encourage positive interactions by role playing different scenarios, making social skill posters, journal writing, play/song writing, and by using appropriate literature. Open classroom meetings are another way of meeting students' needs for belonging, power freedom, and fun. These classroom meetings allow students to solve class problems as a group, view a situation from other students' perspectives, and

respectfully agree and disagree with one another. This exchange between students increases critical thinking skill and allows students to share feelings (Lundeberg, 1997).

Children learn by living and interacting with one another. They need to be a community and work together, form relationships, work out problems, and learn from their first-hand social experiences lessons about fair play, cooperation, forgiveness, and respect for the every individual. The need for this kind of positive social interaction in school is greater than ever before because so many children are not getting it outside of school. Their biggest source of interaction has been with something you plug in or turn on. Helping students get to know each other is the first step in building a moral community. Building bonds starts on the first day of school, and one way to begin to create a feeling of friendliness is do team building activities that give students a non-threatening way to get to know one another (Lickona, 1991). When students know something about each other, it is easier for a teacher to develop the second aspect of building a classroom that communicates: students' respecting, affirming, and caring about each other. This requires providing structured activities that make it safe for students to say publicly something positive about a peer. A feeling of membership and responsibility to and for the group is the third basic aspect of a moral community. To achieve this a teacher has to develop each student's feeling of being a unique and valued member of the class, create accountability to group rules, and foster an ethic of interdependence – the feeling that one person's problem is everybody's problem. This can be accomplished with rituals and traditions that celebrate and mature our existence. Sharing news, songs, daily class meetings, student of the week programs, are just some of the ways to achieve this task (Lickona, 1991).

A thorough review of the literature indicates that there is a need for an implementation of character education programs in schools. A character education program according to Lickona (1996), encourages schools to think about the moral life of the classroom in the school or center as a whole; the classroom components include the teacher as a model, developing a moral classroom community, positive peer relationships, and building a democratic classroom so the children are involved in making decisions to solve real life problems.

The action plan will state that a character education program will be implemented in the fourth grade classrooms at Site A and Site B. Parent newsletters and materials will be sent home on a monthly basis to increase parental awareness.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of implementing the social skills program during this period of September 2000 to December 2000, the targeted 4th grade students will improve their ability to use social skills as measured by teacher observations.

As a result of educating parents on social skills during the period of September 2000 to December, 2000 the targeted 4th grade students' parents will increase their awareness of the importance of appropriate social skills as measured by a parent survey. In order to accomplish the objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. Character education research materials and resource books that support our problem and solutions will be used.
2. Social skills activities and lessons that address responsibility, respect, and citizenship will be constructed

3. Parent newsletters will be developed and sent home for their awareness and knowledge.

Action Plan

In order to achieve these objectives students will engage in activities developed in a character education program.

WEEK/MONTH	WHO	STRATEGY
1-SEPT.	Site B, Site A	-Administer surveys to students and teachers -Send home parent letter -Introduce responsibility and behavior charts expectations -Give background on how I will teach a different social skill a month in my targeted fourth grade class (Site A) -Give background on how I will implement science with our monthly social skill (Site B) -Introduce the focus social skill trait (responsibility) for the month -Responsibility poster -Fill out 1 observation rubric -Write two journal entries this week on different days
2-SEPT.	Site A Site B Site B, Site A	-Implement 2 responsibility lessons - Award Behavior and Responsibility chart stars -Implement 1 responsibility lesson in the science curriculum -Award Responsibility and Behavior chart stars -Write responsibility contracts (p.80) -Send home parent newsletter on responsibility -Fill out 1 observation rubric -Write 2-3 journal entries
3-SEPT.	Site A Site B Site B, Site A	-Implement 2 responsibility lessons -Implement 1 responsibility lesson in the science curriculum -Fill out 2 observation rubric -Write 2-3 journal entries

WEEK/MONTH	WHO	STRATEGIES
4-SEPT.	Site A	-Implement 2 responsibility lessons -Star Charts
	Site B	-Implement 1 responsibility lesson -Star Charts
	Site B, Site A	-Culminating Activity about responsibility -Students' individual reflection on responsibility (p. 25) -2 observation rubrics -2-3 journal entries
5-OCT.	Site B, Site A	-Introduce social skill of the month (Citizenship) -Send home parent newsletter on Citizenship -1 rubric observation -2-3 journal entries -Citizenship poster -Student interview for citizenship (p.40) -Survey for student to take on citizenship (p. 41)
	Site A	-Implement 1 citizenship lesson -star charts
6-OCT.	Site A	-Implement 2 activities -star charts
	Site B	-Implement 1 activity in the science curriculum -star charts
	Site B, Site A	-2 observation rubrics -2-3 journal entries
7-OCT.	Site A	-Implement 2 activities -star charts
	Site B	-Implement 1 activity in the science curriculum
	Site B, Site A	-2 observation rubrics -2-3 journal entries

WEEK/MONTH	WHO	STRATEGIES
8-OCT.	Site A	-Implement 2 activities -star charts
	Site B	-implement 1 activity in the science curriculum -star charts
	Site A, Site B	-Culminating activity on citizenship -Student reflections on citizenship -1 observation rubric -2-3 journal observations
9-NOV.	Site B, Site A	-Introduce new social skill trait (respect) -Send home parent newsletter on respect (p.13) -Respect poster -1 observation rubrics -2-3 journal entries
	Site A	-Implements 1 activity -star charts
10-NOV.	Site A	-Implements 2 activities -star charts
	Site B	-Implement 1 activity in the science curriculum -star charts
	Site B, Site A	-2 observation rubrics -2-3 journal entries
11-NOV.	Site A	-Implements 2 activities -star charts
	Site B	-Implement 1 activity into science curriculum
	Site B, Site A	-2 observation rubrics -2-3 journal entries
12-NOV.	Site A	-Implements 2 activities -star charts
	Site B	-Implement 1 activity into science curriculum -star chart
	Site B, Site A	-Culminating Activity on Respect/ 2observation rubrics -Student journal reflections on respect/ 2 journal entries

WEEK/MONTH	WHO	STRATEGIES
13-DEC.	Site B, Site A	-Review week on responsibility -1 observation rubric -2-3 journal entries -student journal entry -parent survey
	Site A	-star charts - Implement 2 review activities on responsibility
	Site B	-Implement 1 review activity on responsibility
14-DEC.	Site B, Site A	-Review week on citizenship -1 observation rubric -2-3 journal entries -student journal entry - administer student and teacher post surveys
	Site A	-Implement 2 review activities on citizenship -star charts
	Site B	-Implement 1 review activity on citizenship -star charts
15-DEC.	Site B, Site A	-Review week on respect -2 observation rubrics -2-3 journal entries -student journal entry -Culminating Activity
	Site A	-Implement 2 activities on respect -star charts
	Site B	-Implement 1 activity on respect

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effectiveness of the intervention, the following tools and procedures will be followed:

1. An observation rubric (See Appendix D) targeting inappropriate behavior will be used at both sites. The teacher at Site A will use an observation rubric twice a week when teaching the social skill lessons. The teacher at Site B will use an observation rubric once a week while implementing social skill instruction into the daily subject matter. This will start in the beginning of September and continue until the middle of December at both sites. At the end of each week the teachers will add the points on the rubric.

2. Journal/anecdotal notes will be taken throughout the research study at both sites. The teachers at Site A and B will both make journal entries two to three times per week observing student behavior.

3. Behavior charts will be kept at Site A and Site B. At Site A, as students displayed appropriate classroom and hallway behavior they will earn a sticker on their chart. At the end of the month, a drawing will be held for students who had stickers by their names. The teacher/researcher at Site B, gave each group a cup where they can collect beans for positive social behavior displayed in the classroom. At the end of the week, the group with the most beans received a sticker by their individual names.

4. A post student survey (See Appendix E) will be given to the targeted students at both sites to determine if any changes were seen in themselves and their classmates.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was designed to improve the targeted students' social behaviors, which focused on respect, responsibility, and citizenship. In order to accomplish this purpose, the researchers of the targeted classes focused on implementing social skill lessons along with the daily subject matter through direct instruction. The teacher-researcher at both sites gave a social skill survey to the students prior to implementing social skill lessons into the curriculum to see how often students experienced the negative social skills listed on the survey.

Site A

The 28 targeted students at site A consisted of a regular fourth grade class that had all subjects taught in an inclusion setting. The teacher went into the regular education classroom three times a week for a 40-minute period. During this time, specific social skills and concepts were presented by the teacher/researcher and practiced by the students either in cooperative groups or with partners or individually. The three-targeted social skills introduced and reinforced were respect, responsibility, and citizenship. The intervention process was divided into three social skills that would last approximately 4 weeks in duration, teaching one specific social skill during each 4-week period. Students would begin the month by discussing key concepts of the targeted social skill, and what it

meant to them in school, at home, and in the community. Then they would draw an individual cover for their portfolios, reflecting the ideas we had discussed. Throughout the month, the teacher planned various activities for the students to practice the specific social skill. Some of the activities would involve designing posters, role-playing situations, listening to a story and discussing the social skill found in the story, doing class projects in cooperative groups and writing reflective journals.

Reinforcement of these social skills were continuous throughout the intervention, especially when the teacher-researcher was teaching the lesson or would see the class in the hall or other parts of the school. During the lesson and particularly during a cooperative group activity, appropriate behavior and using good manners were stressed. Saying please, thank you, and your welcome, were continually emphasized and recognized when used. Students received a steady review of their acceptable or unacceptable behavior. The researcher would pass out green strips of paper to acknowledge good behavior. When the student accumulated five green strips or completed a cooperative group activity, they would get a sticker on their star chart. At the end of each month, the teacher-researcher would hold a drawing for "no homework" passes, intended for those students who received any stickers on their charts.

Throughout the intervention period, student behavior and progress was monitored by way of observation rubrics and weekly logs written by the researcher. The original plan called for two to three journal-logs entries per week, but this was modified to one or two entries. Students reflected in their journals and completed journal stems to aide in their self-monitoring progress.

Site B

The teacher-researcher was with the targeted fourth grade class 3 days a week for 30 minutes a day. A variety of strategies were implemented into the subject matter that focused on improving the three targeted social skills: respect, responsibility, and citizenship. Each month the students had a specific social skill that was the focus for that month. The teacher utilized a variety of methods to teach the social skills that fit into the subject matter. The teacher used modeling, positive reinforcement methods, cooperative learning, and discussion when teaching respect, responsibility, and citizenship to the targeted students.

The teacher planned carefully to ensure consistent time management and a variety of activities were implemented into the daily curriculum. A variety of methods was used every class period to reinforce the use of appropriate social skills in the classroom. Students would start out their class by explaining how they used the month's specific social skill every class period. Those who did not get a chance to respond in class were able to put their good deed in the social skill box, which the teacher would read and respond to later that week. The students were in cooperative groups the majority of the time and they would receive group beans for exhibiting appropriate social behavior among their group and to other classmates. The groups would accumulate beans the entire week and the group with the most beans received a sticker by their name on the appropriate behavior chart. At the end of each month, the group that received the most stickers received a certificate and homework pass for their positive social behavior. The class was also challenged as a whole to exhibit appropriate social skills in the classroom. They would receive a pushpin on a board if they accomplished their goal as a class that

used the skills that were taught. When they reached their goal of 20 pushpins they received a kickball party. The pushpin goal was set again after they achieved their goal.

Each month the class would make posters that reflected the targeted social skill. The students hung up their posters around the school, which reinforced the positive social skills that they were taught in class. An assortment of lessons was implemented to express the importance of responsibility, some of them being role-plays created by teams of students, which had the topic of being responsible in the science classroom. The students also signed responsibility contracts that targeted getting homework in on time. The students would receive "late assignment slips," which had to be signed by the student and the parent if they did not adhere to their contract. The second month focused on citizenship. Some of the lessons that involved citizenship were making a book of good citizens in science, interviewing good citizens in their family and, as a class, discussing using good manners in and out of the classroom. The final month was the social skill, respect. The students created a list of civil rights, started a recycling center in the classroom, and wrote letters to the staff about how they respect them to name a few.

Student behavior was continuously monitored by the use of observation checklists targeting inappropriate behaviors that were completed by the classroom teacher. Weekly journal entries were also kept of the behaviors that were displayed individually and as a whole class. The students received continuous feedback with regard to acceptable or unacceptable behavior choices. The students knew of consequences if inappropriate behavior choices were made.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of teaching social skill lessons using cooperative grouping and direct teaching, a weekly teacher log was maintained throughout the intervention period. In addition to this, a post student survey was given at the conclusion of the research time frame. An observation rubric (See Appendix D) was used too, however it was deemed invalid. (Further discussion on this tool in recommendations).

Site A – Teacher Log

The teacher-researcher was introduced to the targeted class at the beginning of September and gave them some background information about what was going to happen in class and why they were going to have a social skills lesson twice a week. In the first two weeks of September, the teacher-researcher gave the students a survey (See Appendix C) to discover what they knew about appropriate behavior and if they had ever acted inappropriately. A parent letter (See Appendix A) was sent home to provide information about the program and obtain permission to allow their child to participate. To begin this program, the teacher-researcher asked the questions, " What does it mean to have good character? and What is important about having good character?". Some of the answers were: Character will give you more friends, to have self-discipline, and being kind and helpful to people. Most of the class was baffled and confused when it came to answering this question, mostly because they had never talked about it before.

In the week of September 5 – 8, the first social skill was introduced as Responsibility. The researcher discussed what responsibility looked like and sounded like, then handed out the responsibility cover for their portfolio to decorate. The next class session was talking about being responsible for performing the classroom job

assigned to them by the regular classroom teacher. For the length of the intervention period, the regular fourth grade teacher remarked how responsible each student was when performing his or her job.

The next week, September 11 –15, the class practiced some role-playing situations about being responsible. Then they completed a couple of worksheets about how they would react to a certain situation. The class was assembled into five different groups and read the situation about a group of students on the way to a football game. They pass an overturned garbage can, and one of the boys kicks the garbage into the street. Two other students stop and set the can upright and pick up the garbage, but their friends do not wait for them. Then there are five questions for the group to answer. This activity went fairly well, considering the class had not had much practice working in cooperative groups. The talking level was extremely loud and some students starting to act silly and misbehave. After a couple of role-play skits were finished the teacher-researcher asked the class what could they have done about their behavior and the noise level. The students reached the conclusion that very small voices have to be used when working in cooperative groups and everyone must stay on the topic so silliness does not occur again.

The week of September 19 –22, the class discussed the different traits everyone has, bad or good. A trait can be what a person looks like, feels, thinks, or acts like. Everyone was handed a piece of paper to write four traits they have, that will fit into the four categories of: Look, Feel, Think, and Act. The majority of the class worked very well on this project, while others had a hard time thinking of words to describe themselves. Afterwards the class shared his or her thoughts with a partner and then

turned to someone else to share with. The class began to recognize each person's individuality and respect each other as persons. On the next character education day, the teacher-researcher decided to speak about how important it is to have "good listening" skills, especially when they work in their cooperative groups. The class discussed what good listening skills looked like, and how it was each person's responsibility to look at a speaker and listen attentively. Then the class reflected by completing three statements about how they can be responsible at home, school, and with their homework. Some excellent answers were: "I can be responsible at home by completing my chores without being told, or I can be responsible at school by remembering to take home all my homework."

The next week, September 25 – 29, students finished a worksheet together called "What Should You Do." This paper related different situations, like being asked to smoke a cigarette or ask to go out after curfew, students could find themselves in and how they should act in those situations. The teacher-researcher discussed how everyone could rehearse what to say in advance, so if that certain situations like these would occur, the student already has a reply. So, for about seven minutes the class broke off into pairs and practice a response to these situations. The teacher led a discussion about wanting to do something is not always the same as acting in a responsible manner. The following day, the class completed a worksheet that had them finished the sentence "If I'm responsible when I _____, I can _____. I'm irresponsible when I _____ then I _____. One example of an excellent response was: If I'm responsible when I do my chores, I can go out for ice cream with my family. I'm irresponsible when I don't do my homework, then I can't go on the computer and play

games. At this point in time, most of the students in the class were starting to connect acting responsible to behaving and acting appropriately. Almost everyone chose good topics to write about, and then they shared them with the class.

Soon the month of October came, and with it the introduction of the social skill Respect. The researcher discussed what respect was in the form of a T-chart and the class decorated their portfolio cover on respect. Some of the ideas written on the T-chart were: treat others the way you want to be treated, say nice things, don't interrupt when someone is talking. On October 5th, the teacher arranged the class into cooperative groups for an activity called defining "Respect." Each group came up with ideas on how to answer these statements: We show respect for ourselves when_____, We show respect for others when_____, We show respect for property when_____, We show respect for the world when _____. After the allotted time period, each group shared their answers, while the teacher wrote these ideas on the board. Then as a class, they voted on which were the best answers to be written on the class poster. The finished poster looked like this: "We show respect for ourselves when we keep ourselves clean, We show respect for others when we treat each other right, We show respect for property when we don't destroy it, We show respect for the world when we recycle." The teacher-researcher was very impressed with the thought processing that went into this assignment and how the students were learning the behavior of respect.

The following week, October 10 – 14, the class discussed a few different sayings from around the world centered about "respect." One example of these truisms is, "What you would not wish done to yourself, do not do unto others, Chinese." The class

commented that all these messages basically told them to treat other fairly and the way you would want to be treated. The students pointed out that this was not easy advice to follow in every situation. They proceeded to complete a worksheet about how they can show respect for their family, animals, property, and other things. The next day, they were put into pairs to brainstorm ways to show respect for others. On a sheet of construction paper each pair of students would create a "wanted" poster showing a respectful act. The students really enjoyed this activity and many of the posters depicted a picture and phrase showing respect toward others. Some examples of their catchphrases were: "Lend a Hand When You Can, and Only You Can Prevent Disrespect."

During the week of October 17 – 20, students were sent on a scavenger hunt to look for pictures of respect of disrespect in various magazines. When placed into cooperative groups of four, one person from each group would pick a piece of paper out of a jar that had Respect or Disrespect on it. The group had to look through the magazines for the appropriate pictures and make a collage that communicated respect or disrespect. The groups that picked respect had an easy time finding the pictures they needed, but the groups that selected disrespect found it more difficult to locate pictures depicting disrespect. Afterwards the class discussed why this exists and came up with the conclusion, "that magazines were trying to being positive and send the correct message to everyone reading it and looking at their pictures."

During last week in October, the class finished an activity that helped them identify respectful and disrespectful behavior. The teacher-researcher prepared a list of respectful and disrespectful scenarios. For example: As Heather is walking into the mall,

she holds the door open for a man carrying many packages, or Sean and Dean are talking when Brenda is trying to answer a question. If the action the teacher described was respectful the students would stand up, but if the action was disrespectful, they would stay seated or sit down. This activity went fairly well, but some students became silly and wanted to misbehave. The teacher stopped this action and had a discussion on why these unexpected behaviors occurred. Students reflected upon the actions and stated how hard it was to always act appropriately, especially in an unstructured activity. The researcher agreed, but stated that the purpose of teaching them social skills, was so they could find it easier to act better when these circumstances arose. The next day the students were partnered to work on a Respecting Diversity sheet (See Appendix F). With their partner, they answered the five questions to find out how similar or different they were. Most pairs had a pretty easy time answering the questions, but for some students it was a demanding task. For instance, some pairs had difficulty answering "list three ways your families are alike and three ways they are different". Some students who had not known each other too well before, became closer that day and realized they had more in common than they thought. When the allotted time was up, the teacher had each pair stand before the class, and each read one of the five fill-in answers. The class listened very politely and respected everyone's answers. The teacher-researcher complimented the class on the fine manner in which they listened and acted. This could be an excellent activity to begin the school year with, as well as being a good team-building activity.

The month of November soon arrived and with it a new social skill called Citizenship. As an introduction to this skill, the teacher read a story about Dr. Martin

Luther King, Jr. who used non-violent ways to solve problems and brought about peaceful solutions. One worksheet completed individually was about finding peaceful solutions to different problems (See Appendix G). A few of the various responses were: "walk away from the trouble, count silently to yourself to cool down or tell the teacher". Next, the class had a discussion about what "citizenship" could mean, such as "cooperating with others, being a good neighbor, and protecting the environment". From the students' reflections about the Martin Luther King story, the class understood that communities have to solve problems peacefully and everyone involved in community service projects that help people. During the week of November 13 – 17, the students finished a worksheet called, Are You a Good Citizen at School? . There were eleven questions (See Appendix H) and almost 90% of the class answered with nine or more "yes's," confirming to the researcher that they were on the road to being good citizens at school. Following this activity was another worksheet about the responsibilities of citizenship, which include protecting the environment and resources (See Appendix I). The teacher-researcher asked the students to explain the terms found on this page and clarified any that were confusing. Later the class helped the researcher list many ideas about how they could protect the Earth. Some good responses were: "recycle cans, do not litter or pollute, and remember to turn off lights." The next endeavor was putting the students back into their cooperative groups and having them pick one example from the list on how students can help protect the environment. After choosing an example the groups were to design a bumper sticker that promotes protecting the environment. They could use paints, markers, crayons, glitter, words or pictures to get their message across. Most groups chose the slogans, "Don't Pollute or Don't Be A Litterbug." But overall,

this activity did not go as well as the teacher-researcher had hoped. Only two out of the seven groups worked well together and finished a decent looking product. A few cooperative groups wasted time arguing about what pictures they would draw or who was going to print the words, color or anything else. There also was a lot of tattling on each other and too many students not using their small voices. The teacher-researcher needed to review the rules for working in cooperative groups with the whole class and hoped the next time the students went into cooperative groups, they would work more courteously and effectively.

During the week of Thanksgiving the class only had one session of character education. A good citizen should know something about the country they live in, so the teacher challenged her students to take a Citizenship Quiz (See Appendix J). The students chose a partner to work with and given 15 minutes to complete this task. Everyone worked well together, but a few pairs thought they would look up answers in an encyclopedia or social studies book, and ended up not completely finishing. Only the groups that had an answer written on every line were given a star on their chart for a completed assignment. There were many correct answers on the whole, which impressed the teacher-researcher about how much information they knew about their country.

The following week, November 27 – December 1, the teacher-researcher asked the students to identify people who they thought were good citizens. The class reviewed again what characteristics and actions create a good citizen. The teacher encouraged students to look for examples in a variety of places, including school, at home, in their community, and in the newspapers. For extra credit points, any student could bring in a

newspaper article that showed a good citizen helping the community. The following day, the class listened to short reports on the good citizens they had found and then completed a worksheet about what a good citizen would do in certain situations. On the paper were three scenarios and the students had to write a solution to each problem. One of the scenarios was "you see a man sitting in a wheelchair at the bottom of the steps at the mall. He needs to get to the second floor. How could you help the man?" Most of the students had these excellent responses: "push the man to an elevator and then take him where he wants to go," or "find a security man at the mall and have that person take the man to the second floor." The teacher-researcher was very impressed that the students could think these problems through and come up with some notable solutions. This showed the researcher that the class was processing what was being taught and would be able to demonstrate being a helpful and kind citizen.

One activity to start the week of December 4 – 8, was about interviewing a fellow classmate, and asking them questions like "Do you do anything at school which shows good citizenship? Do you do any volunteer work? If so, describe what you do. What do you think young people could do to show good citizenship?" The teacher-researcher saw some good examples of future courteous citizens with the responses of: "clean up parks, do not litter, respect other people and their property." Most volunteer work the students listed was helping around school, or in the gym, or babysitting at home. The next time the class met for character education, the teacher decided to have a cooperative group activity involving rewriting rules for the: classroom, library, lunchroom, playground, and bathrooms. The class was divided into five groups, each group assigned a specific area with which to come up with a list of rules designed to protect the rights of school citizens.

Each group was given a sheet of chart paper to list the rules it came up with. The teacher asked them to phrase their rules in polite statements, not negative ones. When finished, each group would have to present their list and explain why each rule was chosen. This time the groups of children worked together very well and were able to finish in the time given. The rules they came up with were also very clearly written and many were set in a positive tone, for example: " Listen when someone is speaking," instead of saying do not interrupt when the teacher is talking. Another example was, "walk quietly in the halls," instead of, no talking in the halls.

At the conclusion of the intervention period, the teacher-researcher observed a significant improvement in the way the students treated each other and their teacher. They seemed to respect the each other and did not ridicule each other's work or behavior. There were no physical confrontations in the classroom, and the hallway behavior improved somewhat when the researcher was around to supervise it. The tattling and gossiping seemed to vary during the intervention period, with some weeks being better than others. There also was an increase in saying "please, and thank you" when handing out papers or receiving something from others. Only using cooperative learning techniques during the character education lessons did not provide the students with enough opportunities to practice cooperativeness, and learn how to working together. When working individually, the students' performance was much more acceptable. Overall, the teacher-researcher observed positive character development in the targeted students' social behavior skills.

Site B Teacher Log

The teacher-researcher at Site B kept a weekly log of the students' behaviors, actions taken, and the students' reactions to the social skill lessons. The first week of school the teacher-researcher started to discuss the importance of the appropriate use of positive social skills in and out of the classroom. The teacher instructed the students of the new program that would be used along with the subject matter. The first month's social skill focused on responsibility. The class made a class responsibility poster and discussed the whole class reward the first day, which were class pushpins. The children appeared to be very excited with being a part of this new program and wanted to know all about it. The students seemed to be gossiping quite a bit that first week of class. This behavior is deemed as normal because they were not very comfortable with each other the first week of school and paired up with the students whom they felt content with in class. The teacher-researcher heard very little please and thank you's throughout that week. This also was very normal for the first week of school for a variety of reasons. The teacher-researcher was a new addition to the school and most of the students were very shy and did not know how to react to a new teacher. The class earned one pushpin that week. The teacher was extremely tough on the students, so they would get the full picture of what was expected of them in class.

The second week of school the teacher-researcher continued implementing responsibility activities with the subject matter. The students signed a responsibility contract, which stated that they would hand in homework on time and take full responsibility for their actions. Each class period the students had plenty to say about how they were responsible the days prior to class. The students received their first

homework assignment during the second week of school, after they signed the responsibility contract. Five out of 24 students did not hand in their homework assignment on time. Two of the students lied about why they could not hand the assignment in on time and one spoke in a disrespectful tone to the teacher-researcher when defending himself. After further contemplation, it is the teacher-researcher's thinking that the students thought they would be able to get away with not handing in homework at the beginning of the school year to a new teacher at their school. A colleague of the teacher-researcher stated, "that after the students signed the contract, the kids started to bring in their homework more frequently in the other classes and that the students would remind those of the contract they signed if they did not hand in their homework on time."

The third week of school, the teacher put into action cooperative learning techniques. The students were taught how roles are important during group activities. The teacher did three group activities after this lesson. In two group activities, the students were given individual roles and the teacher-researcher did not give the students roles the last day of the third week. The teacher-researcher saw a vast difference in the student's behaviors when they received the roles vs. when they did not in class. The students acted as if the roles helped them decide what part they need to take when in a group, instead of delegating the roles themselves. The teacher reminded the students consistently the importance of being responsible when in a group two days of class and omitted doing it the last day that week. It was evident that the students worked well when given roles when they needed to work cooperatively in their groups and did very little compromising when they did not receive roles the last day. The students argued and

asked the teacher if they could assign their own roles within their groups when they began to get frustrated. According to Bellanca and Fogarty, this behavior is normal when students are introduced to the use of roles in cooperative groups.

The fourth week the teacher-researcher taught the students another technique to assist them in working successfully in cooperative groups. Each group received a group cup, where they could receive tokens for displaying appropriate social skills within their group. The group with the most tokens by the end of the week received a star next to their name on the class star chart. Some of the actions the student's displayed appeared contrived, however this behavior is perfectly normal because the students were practicing the skills taught to them. There was a tie among the groups for first place. The other groups were not far behind them. The students were also given a second homework assignment and the teacher-researcher had one child not hand in the assignment on time. It seemed as if the students started to hold themselves to the contract they signed. The students had an opportunity to share the responses that the teacher did not get to in the beginning of class by putting them in the "share a good social skill experience box." The teacher-researcher found many responses that first week in the box. The class also received a total of three class pushpins out of three possible pushpins that week as well. The teacher-researcher saw a difference in the student's cooperative group behavior when they learned the different cooperative learning techniques.

The citizenship social skill was introduced the next week. The students started a variety of citizenship lessons that week that are stated in the Action Plan. There continued to be a vast majority of the students participating in the daily social skill review. The students were constantly reminded of the use of good manners and how to

be successful in a group. A few students from group five asked the teacher to switch groups because they were not sure how to get along successfully with their other group members. The teacher- researcher held a group conference after-school and let the students come up with techniques on how they could work together more successfully as a group. The teacher noted a significant difference in that group the next day, they were productive and had more tokens then any other group by the end of the class period. One of the three days the teacher-researcher did not get the cups for the groups and half of the students went and got their cups without being told and stated to the teacher that they were getting them.

The sixth week of the action research the teacher focused on the use of good manners in and out of the classroom. A "shut-up" match that happened in class between two students inspired this lesson. The class received one pushpin out of two possible pushpins that week. The teacher-researcher asked her colleague to keep track of the pleases and thank you's she heard that week after the lesson. The teacher saw interesting happenings in week seven. Groups two and three started to shine through on their discussions at the beginning of class. The reviews remained meaningful and the students appeared enthusiastic to maintain to sharing with the class. Group five that had difficulty getting along before continued to receive the most tokens that week out of their other classmates.

The eighth week, the students had an assignment to complete that tied into the subject matter and our focused social skills. All the students handed in the assignment on time and they were all done with a great amount of quality. The teacher-researcher noted that the gossiping had decreased in the class that week. They started to talk more about

the subject matter at hand rather than each other. Two different groups tied again for the most tokens by the end of the week. A fire drill was also that week and the teacher-researcher received a positive compliment from another teacher about the class's behavior during the fire drill.

Week 10 and 11 the teacher-researcher focused on the social skill respect. The students knew quite a bit about this social skill. They openly shared their experiences about how their peers can be disrespectful to them. The groups shared ways they can be respectful in a group and then put these practices to work these two weeks. The students were reminded of the ways to respectful in the Science classroom and they received six class pushpins out of six possible pushpins those two weeks. The teacher/researcher noted the students were focused on the tasks at hand, rather than gossiping or getting into verbal confrontations with others. The class also received another homework assignment, in which they all turned in on time. There was also a three-way tie for the star chart in week 11.

The teacher-researcher continued to see improvement among the students in week 12. The progress was seen in all groups. There were no verbal confrontations that week and zero gossiping from the students. The teacher did not have to take any individual groups aside and coach them on how to execute the skill of respect in their groups. The students verbally and physically practiced all the three social skills that week. They started to clean up the room when not asked and even stayed a few minutes later to help clean as well. It appeared as if all children wanted to succeed in class that week academically and socially. My colleague indicated that she saw a difference in their ability to be more willing to help around the classroom.

Weeks 13, 14, & 15 were review weeks for the students in all three social skills. We did a variety of lessons that coincided with the subject matter. The students shared experiences about what they had learned about each social skill and how these lessons have benefited their lives. A student, Subject A stated, "I dropped my books in class the other day and four of my classmates ran to help me out, that was a huge change." Subject B indicated, "My mom told me that she likes seeing me be nicer to my little brother." A student from group three shared with the class, "I like picking roles when we do group activities it makes everyone be responsible for taking a job and not backing out." The teacher-researcher had a 100% turn-in rate for homework these 3 weeks. This class was also the first class to receive a pushpin party out of the other 5 classes that the teacher-researcher teaches. They earned their class pushpins at a faster rate than the other classes that did not have the social skills specifically taught to them. Group five that had a problem in the beginning of the year was the winner twice in a row from week 13-14.

Overall, the teacher-researcher observed a significant difference in the students' homework turn-in rate during the 15 weeks of the study. The students had almost a 100% turn-in rate after they signed their responsibility contracts. There were no physical confrontations during the 15 weeks of the action research. Gossiping fluctuated during the 15 weeks, which is normal. The students at first did not know each other and stayed acquainted with those they felt the most comfortable with and after they became more familiar with each other they started to make new friends and dismiss old friends. Two students started out the year lying about homework and that was the only time during the 15 weeks. The teacher-researcher and the student's homeroom teacher saw a massive increase in the use of verbal manners like please and thank you in and out of the

classroom. The students also were more willing to help those in need. At first, their actions seemed artificial, then the students started to help others without thinking about what they were doing. Subject D stated, "I really like to help people, because you never know when you may need help someday." The cooperative learning techniques assisted the children in working effectively in their groups. Working within a group gave the students an opportunity to practice cooperative, social interactions. Each activity was designed so there was positive interdependence among team members. Individually, the students were accountable for their assignment. The students started to take the initiative to assign roles or get the token cups when the teacher omitted telling the students their roles or giving them their token cups. A child from group one stated, "I like the group cups, because it tells me how my group is doing that day." It appeared to the researcher that they started to self-monitor and group-monitor their actions when working in groups. The teacher-researcher noted positive development in the students' social behavior through the 15-week study.

Post Student Survey

The teacher-researcher gave a post student survey (See Appendix E) at the end of the implementation period. The first question asked the students to tell one thing they have learned about developing good character. The answers recorded at both site A and site B fell into four categories: reciprocity, perspective, having consideration for others, and miscellaneous answers. At site A there were 24 post student surveys answered. The majority of the students at site A answered question one with answers that signified being considerate of others' feelings, being kind and nice to each other, and respecting each other. Four out of 24 students' answers fell into the reciprocity category, connecting

how you should treat people the way you would like to be treated. There were 23 students that filled out the post student survey at site B. Six out of 23 students fell into the reciprocity and being considerate of others category. Some surveys stated that they believe everyone should treat people the way they want to be treated. Others felt that they needed to be more passionate and not speak out when someone else is talking.

The second question on the student survey asked, what they have learned about showing respect to yourself, property, and others. At both site A and site B, the majority of students' reflections for showing respect to yourself, centered around taking care of your body, being healthy, and having good hygiene. Eighty percent of the students at site A felt that respecting property meant: to not litter and to not damage others property. Almost 70% of the students at site B stated that they are responsible for treating the other person's property correctly. The answers for property ranged from not harming others' property to putting things back where they belong.

At site A, some of the students felt showing respect to others meant not to steal, not to make fun of anyone, helping out others, and treating everyone fairly. Sixty-five percent of the students at site B felt that showing respect to others meant being nice to each other and "staying out of others' business."

The third question on the post student survey asked how the students can be responsible at home, school, and in class. Eighteen out of 24 students at site A indicated that being responsible at home meant cleaning up after yourself and doing chores. Only 17% of the students at site A felt that respecting family members meant being responsible at home. However, at site B the majority of the students felt that being responsible at home meant that they should respect and follow the rules at home. Seventeen percent of

the students felt that doing their homework when they got home was being responsible at site B. Eleven out of 24 students at site A declared that being responsible at school meant to be nice to each other and not get in physical confrontations. Only 20% of these students felt completing homework was being responsible at school. Site B had an equal number of answers stating that doing homework and being nice to everyone was being responsible at school. Question three asked the students how they could be responsible in their own classroom. The students at site A answered that following the classroom rules was the most important way to be responsible. The majority of the students at site B felt that being helpful in their cooperative groups was the best way to be responsible.

The final part of the survey involved four questions that had three possible answers. Figures 6 below represents the answers to questions four through eight on the survey. The possible answers to the questions were almost never, sometimes, and almost always. At site A almost 80% of the students answered that they now finish and bring their homework back to school the next day. Barely 10% of the students at site A felt they almost never accept the consequences when doing something wrong, and do not stay in control when being teased. However, 78% of the students felt they do stay in control most of the time when someone teases them.

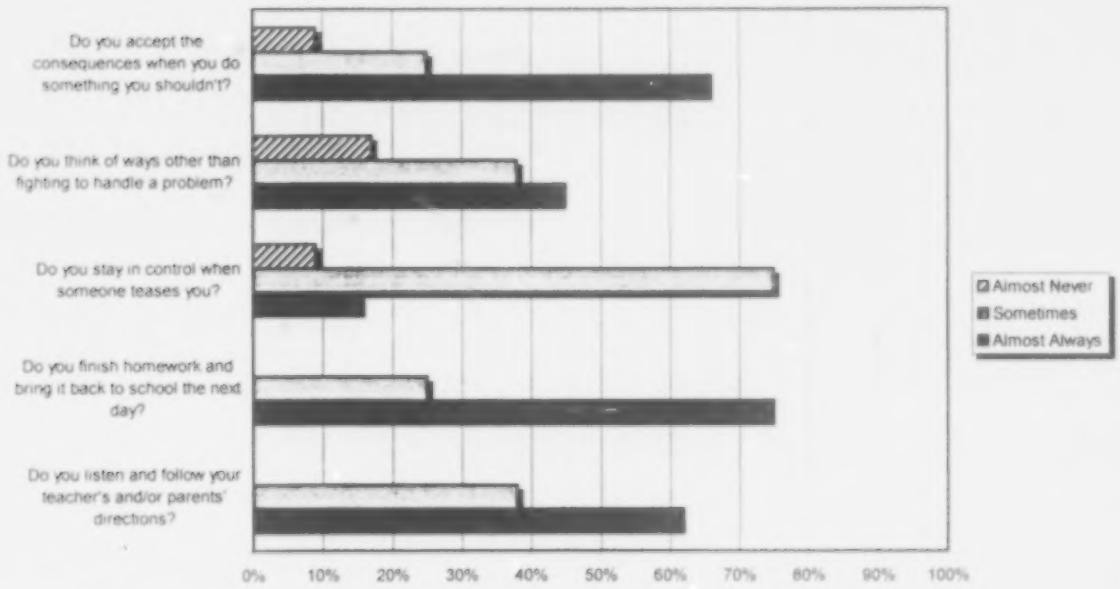

Figure 6 - Percentage of answers 4 thru 8 on post student survey at Site A

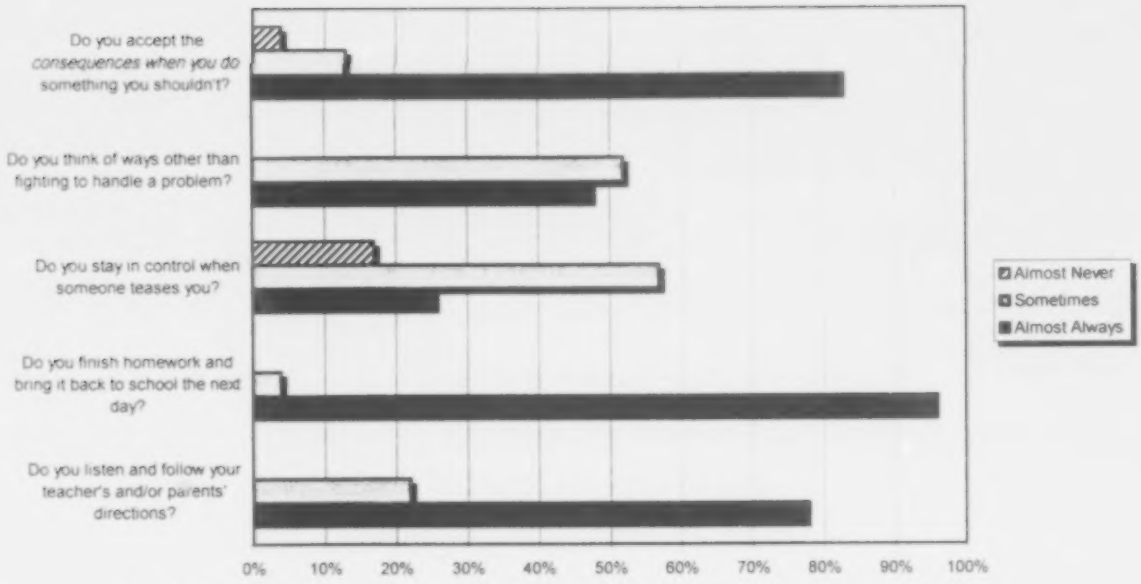

Figure 7 – Percentage of answers 4 thru 8 on post student survey at Site B

Figure 7 reflects the answers from the students at site B to questions four through eight. Almost 100% of the students felt they do their homework and bring it back on time, follow their teachers/parents directions, and accept consequences when they do something they should not being doing. Over 50% of the students are still bothered by the fact that others may tease them.

The closing question on the survey asked the students if they felt that their attitude or behavior had changed since participating in this social skills program. An overwhelming 91% of the students at site A felt that they did benefit from this program. Seventy-one percent of the students at site B also felt their attitudes and behaviors had changed for the better. A number of students at site B stated that it did not change them because they were already practicing good social skills in and out of the classroom.

Overall, the teacher-researchers at both sites saw advantages to this program because of the feedback from the children. Their answers reflected things that were taught to them through direct instruction of the three essential social skills. Teaching the core ideas of respect, responsibility, and citizenship enforced the values through constant practice. The students learned from what they observed and experienced in the classroom. A small percentage of students at site A and site B were not as responsive to this program as the others. Possible reasons may include apathy, medical disorders, and unwillingness to participate. By the culmination of the research project, most of the targeted students were able listen, react, and respond with greater insight than they did at the onset of the project. This is revealed through their answers written on their post student survey (See Appendix K and Appendix L)

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data from the weekly teacher logs and student surveys, the students showed a marked improvement in the targeted behaviors. The social skills learned during direct social skill instruction and cooperative learning sessions appeared to have transferred to interpersonal behavior. As noted in teacher logs, much less time and energy was devoted to correcting inappropriate behaviors, as the social skills lessons were implemented. This allowed more time for uninterrupted, on-task teaching and learning. Teacher-researchers noted a decrease in the time spent repeating instructions, stopping verbal arguments between students, and reminding students about how to treat each other appropriately; therefore, academic engagement increased during the implementation phase. The students seemed to be learning how to talk more appropriately to one another and say please and thank-you

more often. They would apologize without prompting if caught doing something they should not, or using improper language. Social skills learned through weekly activities and practiced *in* cooperative groups, appeared to have made a difference when doing other academic activities in the classroom too.

One shortcoming the researcher at site A noticed, was that teaching social skills for only a 40 minute period 2 or 3 times a week did not have as much carry-over effect as would have liked to be seen. When the class was away from the researcher or out in the hall going to and from "specials" the social skills being taught were not noticeable.

The most important "character traits" gained during this intervention period were the positive attitudes and self-esteem of the students. The teacher-researchers found these attributes hard to measure or document except through student mannerisms and the way they answered questions in class. Most students seemed to perceive themselves differently and act more positively toward one another. A couple of behaviors that seemed to stay the same or appear to increase in activity were teasing each other and gossiping about one another. These actions were not seen as prevalent before the interventions started because of the "newness" of the class and the class cliques had not formed yet. The more the students became acquainted and familiar with each other's likes and dislikes, an increase in these improper behaviors occurred.

Spotlighting one social skill a month appeared to be beneficial to the student's curriculum. This allowed time for the teacher to instruct the class in regular subjects, as well as an additional program for character education. After introducing the month's social skill, the researchers found that doing weekly activities to promote the specific skill kept the student responsive and focused on that specific skill. The researchers found

it helpful to add positive reinforcement by way of behavior charts, no homework passes and drawings if the students remembered to apply correct social skills to all different situations. This would continue until the students learned how to act and could apply the skills learned only with intrinsic motivation. Reinforcement of the specific skill was needed on a daily basis and seen to be keeping the students alert and aware of the skill.

An adjustment had to be made during the analysis of data. An observation rubric was created, but deemed invalid. The reason this observation rubric was invalid was because it targeted the percentage of students rather than the percentage of incidences. To check a classroom's progress the researcher could create a behavior checklist that focuses only on tallying targeted behaviors.

When teaching a character education program, the teacher-researchers realized that no one intervention could alleviate all inappropriate behaviors. There will always be some children who do not respond to these programs or any interventions. The degree of success may depend upon the severity of the children in the school, the amount of time and effort put into the program and the amount of outside support given to the school to implement a social skills program.

Schools can no longer be bystanders at a time when our society is in moral trouble. Schools must do what they can to contribute to the character of the young and the development of their moral health. The teacher-researchers agree with Thomas Lickona when he states, " To develop the character of our children in a complex and changing world is no small task. But it is time to take up the challenge" (Lickona, 1991, p. 21).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I hope you had a terrific summer and ready for a great school year! I am presently working on my Master's of Arts degree in Teaching and Leadership at St. Xavier University. As a candidate for the master's program, I will be conducting an educational research project. The purpose of this research project is to improve social skills in and out of the classroom.

During this school year I will be implementing a variety of activities with your child's regular curriculum. No other subject areas will be neglected, nor will there be anything unusual going on. I will be monitoring the activities and the students to see which techniques work best for them. Participation is completely **voluntary**. NO NAMES WILL BE USED AND GRADES ARE NOT AFFECTED. All information gathered will be kept confidential.

My hope for this study is to improve children's interactions, raise self-esteem, increase responsibility, and develop a strong positive character. The essence behind the study is to create a safe, happy, caring classroom environment. As students learn to care and develop positive social traits, they experience success both academically and socially. Forming happy, socially responsible children should be the goal of every parent and teacher.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

I, the parent/guardian of _____, acknowledge that the teacher-researcher has explained to me about this research and what is involved. I voluntarily give consent to my child's participation in this study. I understand that all information gathered during the study will be kept confidential. I'll return this signed copy to the teacher.

Signature_____Date_____

Teacher Survey

The following survey is for my Master's Action Research Project. Please take the time to fill in the answers and return to my room so I can reward you with a tasty treat!

Direction: **Listed below are social skills that children are more or less proficient in using. This checklist will help you record how well your class uses the various skills. Please rate their use of the skill based on your observation of present or past students.**

Circle 1 if your class NEVER uses this skill
Circle 2 if your class SELDOM uses this skill
Circle 3 if your class SOMETIMES uses this skill
Circle 4 if your class OFTEN uses this skill
Circle 5 if your class ALWAYS uses this skill

1. How often do the students in your class show respect to you or classmates? 1 2 3 4 5

2. Do the students in your class show understanding of others' feelings? 1 2 3 4 5

3. Do your students talk appropriately to one another not using mean phrases? 1 2 3 4 5

4. Do you see your students getting into cliques to gossip? 1 2 3 4 5

5. How often do you find your students lying to you or others? 1 2 3 4 5

6. How often do your students use the words - Please or Thank you? 1 2 3 4 5

7. How often do your students raise their voice or whine to you? 1 2 3 4 5

8. How often do your students complain about another student taking or touching their property? 1 2 3 4 5

9. How often do you have to break up physical confrontations between students? 1 2 3 4 5

10. How often do your students argue or talk back to you? 1 2 3 4 5

11. Social Skills Instruction: Do you feel that you are losing instructional time to deal with social problems? Circle one - Yes No
How Often? 1 2 3 4 5

12. What three character traits do you feel are the most important for teachers to teach? Circle three, please.

RESPECT	HONESTY
RESPONSIBILITY	POSITIVE ATTITUDE
CARING	FAIRNESS
CITIZENSHIP	TRUSTWORTHINESS

Thank you for your cooperation!

Student Survey

Directions: This is a survey asking for your honest opinions on how you act towards others. Your name is not needed, so answer to the best of your ability.

1. Please check any of these behaviors from the list you saw happen last school year.

_____ Saying "shut up"	_____ Calling someone a mean name
_____ Talking back to teachers	_____ Someone not saying "please or thank you"
_____ Someone starting rumors	_____ Hurting someone's feelings
_____ Someone lying to a teacher or friend	_____ Someone touching or taking somebody else's property
_____ Someone pushing another person	_____ Using a disrespectful tone

2. Please check the behaviors that you might have done yourself last school year.

_____ Saying "shut up"	_____ Calling someone a mean name
_____ Talking back to teachers	_____ Someone not saying "please or thank you"
_____ Someone starting rumors	_____ Hurting someone's feelings
_____ Someone lying to a teacher	_____ Someone touching or taking somebody else's property
_____ Someone pushing/shoving another person	_____ Using a disrespectful tone

3. Tell me how you think students should get along with one another._____

_____.

Appendix D

Observation Rubric

Criteria	Does not meet expectations 0	Somewhat meets expectations 1	Meets expectations 2	Total
Students not saying shut-up	Less than ½ of the students displayed	½ of the students displayed	All students displayed	
No talking back to the teacher	Less than ½ of the students displayed	½ of the students displayed	All students displayed	
Students not gossiping	Less than ½ of the students displayed	½ of the students displayed	All students displayed	
Students not lying to the teacher	Less than ½ of the students displayed	½ of the students displayed	All students displayed	
Students not engaging in physical confrontations	Less than ½ of the students displayed	½ of the students displayed	All students displayed	
Students not calling each other names	Less than ½ of the students displayed	½ of the students displayed	All students displayed	
Students using common courtesy like "please and thank you"	Less than ½ of the students displayed	½ of the students displayed	All students displayed	
Students not teasing one another	Less than ½ of the students displayed	½ of the students displayed	All students displayed	
Students are not taking or misusing my property or others	Less than ½ of the students displayed	½ of the students displayed	All students displayed	
Students did not use a disrespectful tone with the teacher or others	Less than ½ of the students displayed	½ of the students displayed	All students displayed	

Total Points: _____

Point Scale:

20 - 18 = A Wonderful Social Skill Day

17 - 15 = Fair Social Skill Day

11 – 9 = Poor Social Skill Day

14 – 12 =Good Social Skill Day

Social Skills
Post Student Survey

Name _____

1. **Tell me one thing you have learned about developing good character?**

_____

_____

2. **What have you learned about showing respect:**

a) To yourself?

_____

b) For property?

_____

c) To others?

_____

3. **How can you be responsible at:**

a) Home?

_____

b) School?

_____

c) In your classroom?

_____

Answer these questions by circling the answer most appropriate.

4. Do you listen and follow your teachers' and/or parents' directions?

Almost Always Sometimes Almost Never

5. Do you finish homework and bring it back to school the next day?

Almost Always Sometimes Almost Never

6. Do you stay in control when someone teases you?

Almost Always Sometimes Almost Never

7. Do you think of ways other than fighting to handle a problem?

Almost Always Sometimes Almost Never

8. Do you accept the consequences when you do something you shouldn't?

Almost Always Sometimes Almost Never

9. Has your behavior or attitude changed since participating in this program? Yes No

Appendix F

Respecting Diversity

Name _____

Find a partner. Together, complete these questions.

1. List three ways you and your partner look alike and three ways you look different.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

2. List three ways your families are alike and three ways they are different.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

3. List one movie you both like. Each list a movie you don't like.

_____ _____

_____

4. List three activities you both like to do. Each list an activity you don't like to do.

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____

5. List one book you both like. Each list a book you don't like.

_____ _____

_____

Peaceful Solutions

Name _____

Martin Luther King Jr. brought about social reform using nonviolent techniques, such as talking, negotiating, boycotting, letter-writing, marches, and demonstrations. A nonviolent, peaceful solution solves the problem without harming others. Write a peaceful solution for each.

1. You see a classmate, who is taller and bigger than you, teasing a first grader on the playground.

_____

_____

2. Becky, a classmate, uses an offensive racial slur.

_____

_____

3. You're walking down the hallway when a student from another class bumps into you.

_____

_____

4. You are fighting with a classmate over who got the ball first.

_____

_____

5. A group of students begin mimicking you.

_____

_____

Appendix H

Are You a Good Citizen at School?

Citizenship

Name _____

Write yes or no.

1. _____ Do you always follow the rules?

2. _____ Do you respect the authority of your teacher(s)?

3. _____ Do you volunteer for jobs in the classroom?

4. _____ Do you respect the authority of your principal?

5. _____ Do you participate in a school volunteer group, such as safety patrol?

6. _____ Do you always put your trash in the wastebasket?

7. _____ Do you return your library books on time?

8. _____ Do you respect the authority of your librarian?

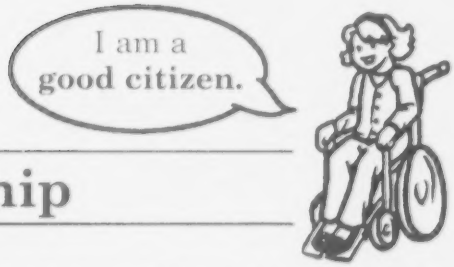
9. _____ Do you work and play cooperatively with all your classmates?

10. _____ Do you return your homework on time?

11. _____ Do you follow the fire drill rules?

List one way you can improve being a good citizen at school and practice this behavior.

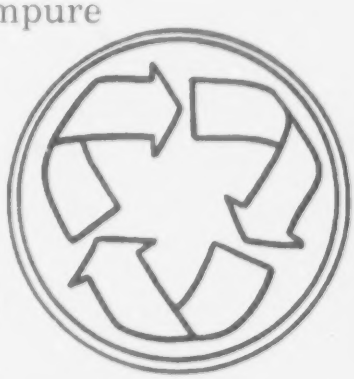
Name _____



Earth Citizenship

Directions: The responsibilities of citizenship include protecting the Earth's environment and resources. Match each word to its meaning.

_____	1. environment	a.	found in nature
_____	2. protect	b.	make dirty or impure
_____	3. conserve	c.	keep safe
_____	4. waste	d.	dangerous
_____	5. recycle	e.	poisonous
_____	6. replace	f.	save, not waste
_____	7. pollute	g.	use needlessly
_____	8. natural	h.	use again
_____	9. resource	i.	surroundings
_____	10. hazardous	j.	use up
_____	11. toxic	k.	a supply of material
_____	12. consume	l.	put back



List four things you can do to be a protector of the Earth.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name _____

Citizenship Quiz

Directions: How much do you know about the country you live in? If you are a citizen (or are planning to become one), try this quiz.

1. Who is the leader of your country? _____
2. What is your country's capital city? _____
3. What do the symbols on your flag stand for? _____
4. How many states or provinces does your country have? _____
5. In what year was your country formed? _____
6. How old does a citizen have to be to vote? _____
7. What form of government does your country have?

   _____
8. What is the name of your national anthem?

   _____
9. What are the main branches of government?

   _____

   _____

   _____
10. What holiday commemorates your country's independence?

    _____

    _____
11. What countries border your country? _____

    _____
12. What important document sets forth the laws of your country?

    _____

Appendix K

Social Skills
Post Student Survey

Name _____

1. Tell me one thing you have learned about developing good character?

having good character develops your inner self.

2. What have you learned about showing respect:

a) To yourself?

If you don't respect your self you don't have a reason to live.

b) For property?

It is not smart to trash someone because it is their's not yours.

c) To others?

You should respect them for who they are.

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3. How can you be responsible at:

a) Home?

I do my chores

b) School?

I do my work

c) In your classroom?

I put mail in the mail boxes

d) At recess/On the playground?

Not fight.

Answer these questions by circling the answer most appropriate.

4. Do you listen and follow your teacher's and/or parents' directions?

(Almost Always) Sometimes Almost Never

5. Do you finish homework and bring it back to school the next day?

Almost Always (Sometimes) Almost Never

6. Do you stay in control when someone teases you?

Almost Always Sometimes (Almost Never)

7. Do you think of ways other than fighting to handle a problem?

Almost Always (Sometimes) Almost Never

8. Do you accept the consequences when you do something you shouldn't?

(Almost Always) Sometimes Almost Never

9. Has your behavior or attitude changed since participating in this program?

Yes (No)

Social Skills
Post Student Survey

Name _____

1. Tell me one thing you have learned about developing good character?

Dont be rude to other people, don't start a fight, treat people the way you would like to be treated, and respect your elders.

2. What have you learned about showing respect:

a) To yourself?

Always try to keep yourself healthy.

b) For property?

I learned that you shouldn't throw trash on anything on other peoples lawn, house, car, etc.

c) To others?

I learned not to make fun of people or be mean to them.

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3. How can you be responsible at:

a) Home?

You can do your chores, like brushing your teeth and making your bed.

b) School?

You can bring your homework in on time and follow directions.

c) In your classroom?

Put things back where you found them.

d) At recess/On the playground?

Don't start fights and try to be nice to everyone.

Answer these questions by circling the answer most appropriate.

4. Do you listen and follow your teacher's and/or parents' directions?

(Almost Always) Sometimes Almost Never

5. Do you finish homework and bring it back to school the next day?

(Almost Always) Sometimes Almost Never

6. Do you stay in control when someone teases you?

Almost Always (Sometimes) Almost Never

7. Do you think of ways other than fighting to handle a problem?

(Almost Always) Sometimes Almost Never

8. Do you accept the consequences when you do something you shouldn't?

(Almost Always) Sometimes Almost Never

9. Has your behavior or attitude changed since participating in this program?

(Yes) No

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Appendix L

Social Skills
Post Student Survey

Name _____

1. Tell me one thing you have learned about developing good social skills.

I have learned to listen to some people's opinions and, if they want to do something and so do I, I've learned to say that they can do it instead of me.

2. What have you learned about showing respect:

a.) To yourself?

I have learned to treat others the way I would want to be treated.

b.) To property?

I have remembered to put things back.

c.) To others?

I have learned to look at someone and take ~~c~~what they have.
for

3.) How can you be responsible at:

a.) Home?

I will help my family more.

b.) School?

I will learn to respect others

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C.) In your science classroom?

I will learn to help others.

D.) In your groups in science?

I will learn to wait for others.

Answer these questions by circling the answer most appropriate.

4. Do you listen and follow you teacher's and/or parents' directions?

Almost Always Sometimes Almost Never

5. Do you finish homework and bring it back to school the next day?

Almost Always Sometimes Almost Never

6. Do you stay in control when someone teases you?

Almost Always Sometimes Almost Never

7. Do you think of ways other than fighting to handle a problem?

Almost Always Sometimes Almost Never

8. Did you feel that the group cups helped you become more conscious of being nice and helpful to your group members?

Almost Always Sometimes Almost Never

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Appendix L

Social Skills
Post Student Survey

Name _ _____

1. Tell me one thing you have learned about developing good social skills.

I have learned if you are nice to some one they will be nice to you.

2. What have you learned about showing respect:

a.) To yourself?

If I respect myself, I will feel better.

b.) To property?

If I respect property, every thing will be cleaner and look better.

c.) To others?

If I respect others, they will respect me.

3.) How can you be responsible at:

a.) Home?

At home I can do my chores.

b.) School?

At school I can bring every thing in on time.

C.) In your science classroom?

In science I can clean up every thing.

D.) In your groups in science?

In my group I can be nice to every one and help every one.

Answer these questions by circling the answer most appropriate.

4. Do you listen and follow you teacher's and/or parents' directions?

(Almost Always) Sometimes Almost Never

5. Do you finish homework and bring it back to school the next day?

(Almost Always) Sometimes Almost Never

6. Do you stay in control when someone teases you?

Almost Always (Sometimes) Almost Never

7. Do you think of ways other than fighting to handle a problem?

(Almost Always) Sometimes Almost Never

8. Did you feel that the group cups helped you become more conscious of being nice and helpful to your group members?

(Almost Always) Sometimes Almost Never

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